

# Wildland Fire Leadership Challenge

## Followership is Leadership

### WOMEN IN WILDLAND FIRE

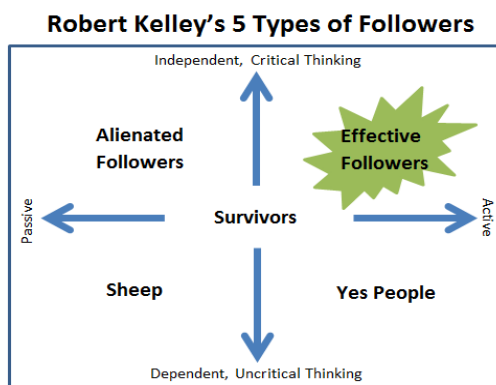
Basic Fire School  
Optional After Hour  
Sessions

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### INTRODUCTION

Most mistakenly equate good followers as merely being obedient, but according to Robert Kelley, effective followers demonstrate qualities far beyond obedience. In his article, "In the Praise of Followers," Kelley describes five types of followers: sheep, yes people, alienated followers, survivors and effective followers.



The group of effective followers is what fire management aims for, as they are not all that different from effective leaders.

*"Effective Followers think for themselves and carry out their duties and assignments with energy and assertiveness. Because they are risk takers, self-starters, and independent problem solvers, they get consistently high ratings from peers and many superiors. Followership of this kind can be a positive and acceptable choice for parts or all of our lives—a source of pride and fulfillment.*

*Effective followers are well-balanced and responsible adults who can succeed without strong leadership. Many followers believe they offer as much value to the organization as leaders do, especially in project or task-force situations... Followership is not a person but a role, and what distinguishes followers from leaders is not intelligence or character but the role they play."*

The concept of the Effective Follower is in line with Wildland Fire Leadership Development's 2015 Leadership Challenge theme, "Followership is Leadership." Kelley suggests that this follower possesses several essential qualities: self-management, commitment, competence (master skills) and focus, and courage (credibility and honesty). But following in a new group with its own organizational culture is not always obvious.

The optional after hour sessions that Women in Wildland Fire sponsored during this year's basic fire school aimed to expose students to the obvious and subtle values, priorities, behaviors and traditions in wildland firefighting and empower them with the knowledge and the tools to become effective followers.

## SUMMARY

Basic fire school in the Color Country Fire Management Area held in southern Utah tries to simulate a fire assignment while teaching first year firefighters the technical skills and knowledge of fundamental wildland firefighting. Students camp at the course location for the week, wake up each morning and eat breakfast from a local caterer and instead of heading out to the fire-line they head to the classroom. Roughly 75 students from three different National Forests (Dixie NF, Fishlake NF, and Manti-La Sal NF), 2 different National Parks (Bryce Canyon NP and Zion NP), the BLM (AZ Strip and Color Country), State of Utah and the Utah Conservation Corps participate in the training.

Each day, students sat in the classroom for hours learning the basic technical aspects of wildland firefighting. If they are lucky, their instructors peppered the material with real life experiences, however those stories are often full of terms, concepts, and humor that new firefighters may not be familiar with. After years of service, many of us have learned a sock combination that works, items we cannot live without at fire camp, what modules we like to work on, resources that are available for current information and career development, and the value of an inappropriate comment applied appropriately. We forget that at one time, long ago in our careers, a lot of this was just as new to us as fire shelters and nomex.

Optional after hours sessions were provided to address these types of things in an informal setting. By sharing our experiences and knowledge, our triumphs and failures, and the tricks we have learned along the way, we create an open and welcoming atmosphere for new firefighters during a time when the environment and information is very new and foreign. By introducing and engaging students in sessions that break down barriers presented by our organizational culture, we empower students to be effective followers on their first step to successful leadership in wildland fire management.

## The Role of Follower

Bosses are not necessarily good leaders; subordinates are not necessarily effective followers. Many bosses couldn't lead a horse to water. Many subordinates couldn't follow a parade. Some people avoid either role. Others accept the role thrust upon them and perform it badly.

At different points in their careers, even at different times of the working day, most managers play both roles, though seldom equally well. After all, the leadership role has the glamour and attention. We take courses to learn it, and when we play it well we get applause and recognition. But the reality is that most of us are more often followers than leaders. Even when we have subordinates, we still have bosses. For every committee we chair, we sit as a member on several others.

So followership dominates our lives and organizations, but not our thinking, because our preoccupation with leadership keeps us from considering the nature and the importance of the follower.

What distinguishes an effective from an ineffective follower is enthusiastic, intelligent, and self-reliant participation—without star billing—in the pursuit of an organizational goal.

-Robert Kelley  
*"In Praise of Followers"*

## What is the Women in Wildland Fire program?

Women in Wildland Fire (WIWF) is a program dedicated to seeking out women with the characteristics and aptitude that will translate well to wildland firefighting. By providing initial wildland firefighting training and experience, WIWF aims to expose a more diverse set of qualified candidates to job and career possibilities they may not have known existed.

WIWF aims to sponsor 20 women as AD Casual Hires among the Forests, provide mentorship for participants and help individuals apply for seasonal positions. Participants receive up to 80 hours of training that include program orientation, basic fire school, fitness testing, and local orientation where applicable. The ultimate goal of this program is to increase the number of qualified, enthusiastic, and professional women on certification lists for the Fire and Aviation hiring.

WIWF is currently funded by a three year grant (FY2014-2016) sponsored by Fire and Aviation Management at the Forest Service Washington Office. This grant supports WIWF efforts on the Dixie, Fishlake and Manti-La Sal National Forests. We have partnered with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest to assist them in developing a similar program of their own.

## PROJECT

For the first four days of fire school the Women in Wildland Fire program (a USFS special outreach program based in southern Utah) sponsored optional after hour sessions covering a variety of topics from, "Ten Things I Wish I'd Known My First Year" to, "What It's Like To Be a Smokejumper (refer to page 5 for After Hour Session Agenda and page 12 for more ideas for session topics).

Each session was held in the dining area to help create a more engaging atmosphere and to make it less formal and create lines of open communication. An activity was conducted at the beginning of the sessions to introduce key ideas in our organizational culture such as team work, diversity and communication (see page 16 for activity ideas). Activities were designed to make the students think critically about their roles within their fire organization and how they could contribute to a better work environment. These exercises were also designed to actively involve students, prepping them to participate in discussions with the presenters.

Once the evening's activity was completed the night's topic and speakers were introduced. Each talk was scheduled to last no more than an hour with plenty of time for students to ask questions. A wide range of speakers (experienced and novice firefighters, members of different modules, and non fire personnel) were recruited to provide different perspectives and demonstrate the variety of career options within wildland fire management. Speakers were encouraged to generate an informal engaging discussion or presentation using whatever tools they felt would hold the attention of the students. Many drew upon humbling and often entertaining personal experiences that highlighted various points they were making. The final optional after hour session was held after the field day portion of S-130 and consisted of watching a fire documentary to provide some historical perspective on fire management.

### Leadership values and principles addressed through the after hour sessions:

- Be proficient in your job, both technically and as a leader.
- Make sound and timely decisions.
- Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished.
- ✓ Develop subordinates for the future.
- ✓ Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.
- ✓ Keep your subordinates informed.
- ✓ Build the team.
- Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.
- ✓ Know yourself and seek improvement.
- Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.
- ✓ Set the example.

Over half of the students attended the first session, roughly a third the next night and attendance hit its lowest on the third evening with only 10 students participating. The session covering the documentary received the highest attendance with approximately 75% of the students showing up to watch “The Big Burn.”

Feedback from the students showed they enjoyed the sessions they attended particularly the personal stories that tied in with what they were learning in the classroom. The informal nature of the sessions allowed the students to interact more casually with the presenters creating an environment where they felt comfortable asking questions they may not have asked in the classroom setting. However, as time spent during required instruction unexpectedly increased as the week went on students were less than thrilled to attend the after hour sessions. In addition to what we learned from the feedback provided from the students another lesson we learned was to have contingency presentation or activities prepared. Some activities require large numbers of participants to illustrate points and were ineffective as attendance dwindled. Also having back up presentations or discussions can help if speakers have to change plans last minute and cannot attend.

Based on the feedback from the students, we were successful in creating an open atmosphere for honest communication and started to break down barriers presented by our organizational culture. By providing the students with an encouraging work place we have provided an expectation of active participation. Active participation is one part of being an effective follower according to Robert Kelley. As the season progresses and students gain more skills and knowledge relating to wildland fire they will have the tools needed to independently and critically think on the job, the second half of being an effective follower. By providing students with an experience of active participation we have helped them with the first step of becoming an effective leader in wildland fire management.

# Optional After Hour Sessions Agenda

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## **MONDAY:** 1900 – 2000

Intro to after hour sessions

*There is so much more to fire than squirting water, digging fire-line and mopping up. With the long hours and hard work, what keeps career wildland firefighters coming back season after season? What are the career opportunities? What can I do to be successful? You've spent all day in class learning the "HOW?" ...come and learn the "WHY?" as seasoned firefighters share their experiences during the optional after hour sessions.*

“10 Things I Wish I Knew When I Started”

Sarah Rife & Michelle Sims

“It Takes All Sorts”

Megan Saylor

## **TUESDAY:** 1900-2000

What is it *really* like?

Experience from the mouths of the folks on the ground

*It takes many types of people with a variety of skills to manage a fire. These include firefighters with diverse skills as well as people behind the scene that support the firefighters in their efforts. Engine crews, hand crews, helitack crews, hotshot crews, smoke jumpers and dispatchers are just a few of the folks that make things happen.*

“Dispatchers”

Color Country Dispatch

“Helitack”

TBD

“Hotshots”

Cedar City IHC

“Smokejumpers”

Eric Eastep

## **WEDNESDAY:** 1900-2000

When you're in the field, what happens back in the “office”?

*It takes more than just firefighters to manage a fire. From planning to public information to finance, the support is endless and so are the career options. Success isn't the same for everyone. The career ladder in fire rarely follows a straight path...it's more like a jungle gym. Come see some of the different faces of success.*

“Public Information”

Marcia Gilles

“Finance & Paperwork – Why Its Important”

Wendy Soper

“Career Possibilities”

TBD

## **THURSDAY:** 1900-2000

Movie Night

“Big Burn” or “Planes: Fire and Rescue”

# Optional After Hour Sessions Posters

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Various posters were hung around the classroom and adjoining facilities to advertise the evening sessions. The following posters were used to inform students of when and where the sessions would be held and what topics they could expect to be covered. A combination of Microsoft products (Microsoft Publisher) and free online graphics programs ([canva.com](https://www.canva.com)) were used to create the posters. Announcements were also made during class.

# WHAT THEY **DON'T COVER** IN CLASS



## **OPTIONAL AFTER HOUR SESSIONS**

There is so much more to fire than squirting water, digging fire line and mopping up. With the long hours and hard work what keeps career wildland firefighters coming back season after season? What are the career opportunities? What can I do to be successful? You've spent all day in class learning the "HOW?" come and learn the "WHY?" as seasoned firefighters share their experiences during the optional after hour sessions.

**Starting Monday, May 18 @1900**



## WHAT IS IT LIKE **REALLY?**

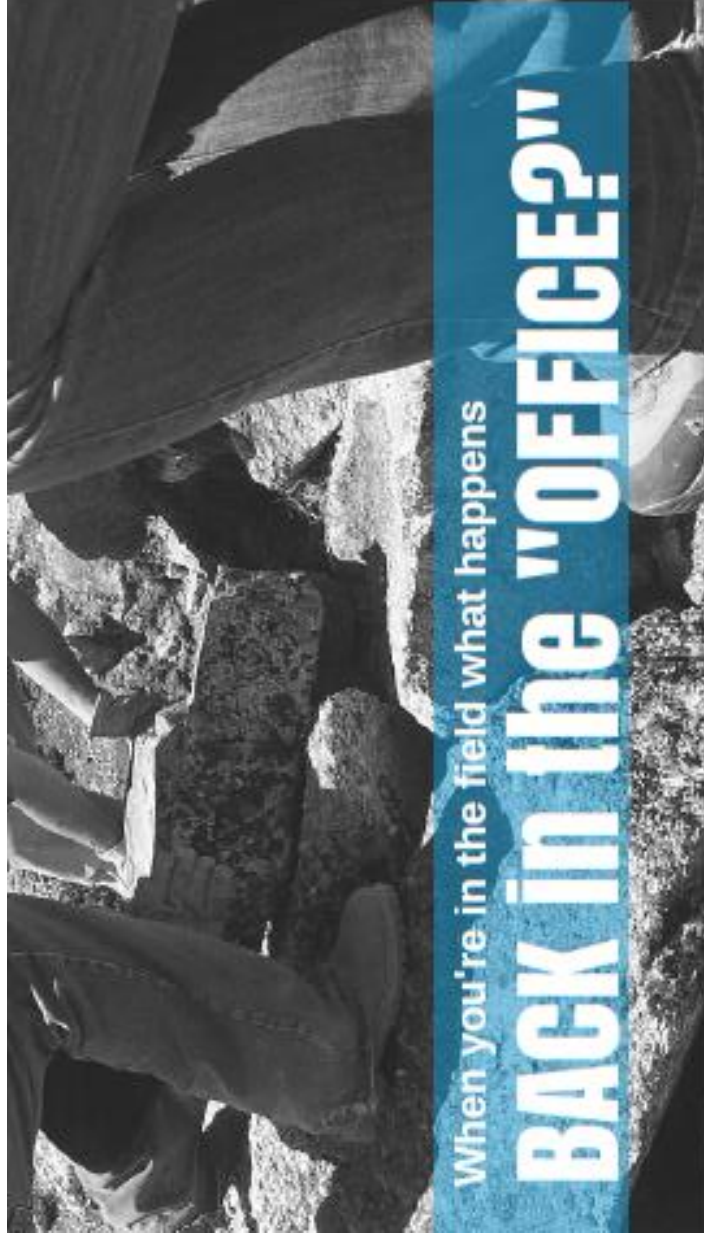
*experience from the mouths of the folks on the ground*

It takes many types of people with a variety of skills to manage a fire. These include firefighters with diverse skills as well as people behind the scene that support the firefighters in their efforts. Engine crews, hand crews, helitack crews, hotshot crews, smoke jumpers and dispatchers are just a few of the folks that make things happen.

Listen to their stories during the after hour session:

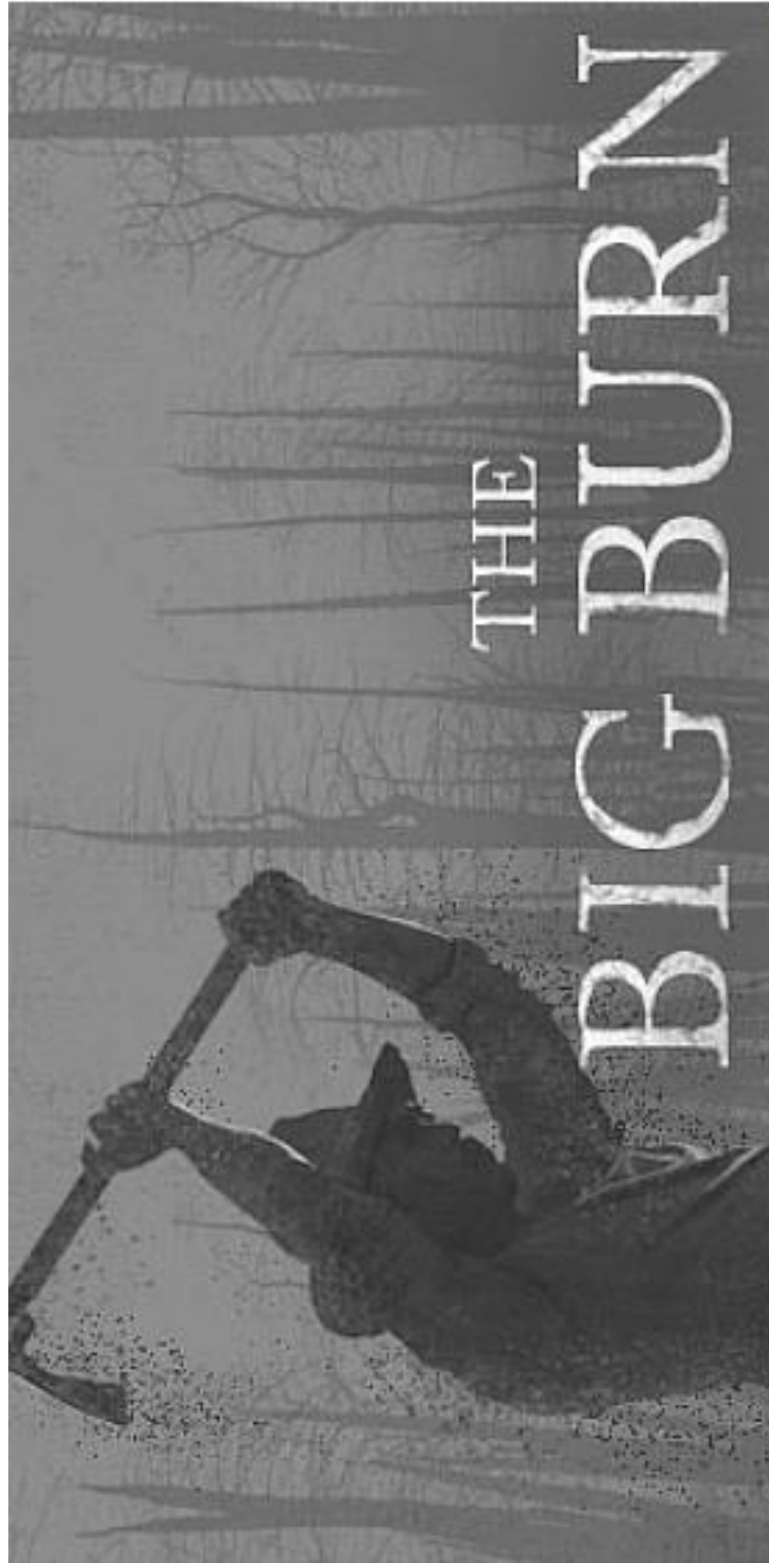
**Tuesday May 19th @ 1900**





It takes more than just firefighters to manage a fire. From planning to public information to finance, the support is endless and so are the career options. Success isn't the same for everyone. The career ladder in fire rarely follows a straight path...its more like a jungle gym. Come see some of the different faces of success in the after hour session.

**wednesday, May 20th @ 1900**



# MOVIE

## NIGHT

Never in recorded United States history has there been anything to match the fire of 1910. For its size, its ferocity, its impact, nothing comes close. Starting in April, fires broke out continuously. In August over the course of a weekend, 3 million acres were burned. Several towns were leveled and about 100 were killed. But beyond the astonishing damage the fire stands out for another reason. As a nation, the United States had never tried to organize a large force to fight a wildfire.

**Thursday, May 21 @ 1900**

# After Hour Sessions Evaluation

Optional After Hours Sessions Evaluation

Which after hour session(s) did you attend?

☒ Monday ☒ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☒ Thursday

SORRY!!

Did you find the session(s):

☒ Useful ☒ Informative ☒ Helpful ☐ Reinforced class info ☒ Entertaining ☐ Misleading ☐ Waste of Time

What did you like best about the sessions?

IT WAS INFORMATIVE IN WAYS OUR CLASSES WERE NOT.  
I LIKED THE INSIDE SCOOP.

What can we do to improve sessions?

THEY WERE GREAT - MAYBE TALK THEM UP DURING THE DAY  
TO RECEIVE MORE ATTENDEES.

Ideas for future topics?

THESE WERE GREAT TOPICS FOR 1ST YEAR STUDENTS OF FIRE

Please provide any additional comments on the back of this sheet.

THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR HARD WORK. I VERY  
MUCH APPRECIATED IT. 😊

The evaluation form was meant to gain information on the sessions as a whole. If one is looking for more specific feedback it is recommended to do an evaluation after each session or speaker.

# After Hour Session Ideas

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Ideally, each after-hours session should last 30 minutes to one hour. Topics discussed and points made should generate discussion and get the audience involved. The idea is to be approachable, entertaining and informative. The use of activities, video, pictures and hands on items is encouraged to make it feel less like a classroom. Below are some ideas for topics that could be covered in optional sessions:

## What it takes to be a...

- Hotshot
- Smokejumper
- Rappeller
- Helitack
- Wildland Fire Module
- Engines
- Dispatcher
- Prevention

S-130 as a unit that discusses Resources but really doesn't go into what it takes or the experiences they provide. From our own experiences we know how the different modules work and working on one can vastly differ from working on another. Speakers can talk about formal requirements and how that works in reality. They can also discuss what drew them to a particular module over others or how their experience helped them gain a better understanding of managing fire and people. This topic really lends itself for speakers to express their passion about their job and get students fired up about their choice of fighting fire. This topic can also be addressed as one session or there could be different speakers on different days talking about their module.

## 10 things I wish I knew when I started/if I knew then what I know now/everything I really need to know about fire I learned as a rookie/how the things I learned in fire changed how I do things out of fire...

The right socks, different ways of lacing boots, underwear rotation, the heavy use of acronyms, different types of humor, to shower or not to shower, MRE bartering system, the bane of red delicious apples and green oranges, never pack a banana, use the bathroom at every stop, pooping in the woods, subpar fire camp coffee, how fire vocabulary can be used to describe non-fire situations, finding yourself doing fire things in non-fire situations, how to explain your job to your grandparents...the options and topics are endless.

This discussion can end up being pretty humorous and allows for other experienced fire fighters to chime in with their experiences. Most of items that fit into this topic are things we typically don't deal with outside of fire. All of these "mini" topics don't necessarily change the type of work we do or how we do it, yet they were little fire life lessons that, now that we know them, have made things a little easier.

## Fire doesn't have a career ladder. It's more of a jungle gym.

This topic discusses the many career paths that are possible in fire from moving between suppression modules, from suppression to fuels, into management or dispatch, and fire support options (logistics, plans, finance). Fire is one of those areas where several fields combine to make

things work. By starting on the ground you gain a field level understanding of how things work and knowing the different options you have can make for a unique career path for each individual. And sometimes fire can even be a gateway into other land management careers.

### **What should I carry in my red bag?**

I'm sure many of us have worked with that individual who you swear has a small child inside their red bag or the individual who didn't bring a jacket to a late season assignment in Montana. Figuring out exactly what you need and when you need it for a two week assignment can be pretty daunting when you have never experienced fire camp. This topic provides an opportunity for speakers to discuss what works for them and a chance for students to ask questions they might feel embarrassed about. By providing a framework for packing their red bag we could making more room on our trucks and save first year firefighters from making the same mistakes we may have.

### **What to expect at a fire camp...**

"What? I have to walk in a line? Shower in a semi-trailer?" When we say "fire camp" to people not in fire it may conjure up images of log seats around a fire ring and roasting marshmallows, and this could be what many first year firefighters may be expecting. Imagine the horror they experience when flood lights coming on at five in the morning and port-a-potty doors are slamming in the middle of the night. Enlighten students on the nuances of large fire camps as well as the joys of being spiked out by discussing the "ins and outs" of fire camps and some of the tricks learned to make them more bearable.

### **Fireside war stories...**

"This one time in band camp..." We all have them... war stories. Some are funny. Some are exciting. And some are very serious and tragic. Sharing amazing and not-so-amazing experiences in our careers can shed some light on things that are not always expected and demonstrate different ways of handling the unpredictability that our job entails. This topic provides a great opportunity for a question and answer discussion about anything and everything students have concerns about.

### **Is all fire bad? Fire's role in the environment...**

The Smokey Bear campaign has worked its magic. Many people feel that all, or at least most, fire is bad. It kills Bambi. It burns down homes. It makes the forest ugly and slick black. But we know that it has its role. First year firefighters may not understand why we take or don't take certain actions when it comes to fire management. A lot of things go into making those decisions and allowing fire to act naturally on the landscape is one of those. By explaining how fire is part of a bigger picture, students can start to understand how they fit into that picture as a wildland firefighter.

### **Fire History/know where we've been...**

One of the recent WFSTAR videos contained a comment that really struck a chord. It was a comment made in relation to the South Canyon tragedy about how some of the new firefighters weren't even

born then and they weren't familiar with a time when we didn't have some of the tools and guidelines we have now. Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Students may also find it interesting to learn the origin of the Fire Orders and Watchout Situations. This is also an opportunity to talk about historic fires such as the fires of 1910 and Yellowstone Fire of 1988 and the current trends of fires (size, severity, and locations). This topic can be very entertaining by showing some older firefighting tools. For example: older IRPG/fire line handbook vs. current ones, old metal back pack pumps vs. current ones, old hard hats, old nomex, fire shelters etc. And what kind of fire history would it be to not mention the story of Ed Pulaski? For more general wildland fire history, the NPS has a fairly good timeline on their webpage.

### **Importance of paper work...**

It's probably everyone's least favorite aspect of any job...paperwork. But it is becoming increasingly important. Time, certificates, fire experience, injuries, task books, performance evaluations, pay stubs, receipts, and general documentation are just the beginning. Explaining why some of these things are important, not only at the moment but later in their career as well, can save new firefighters a lot of heartache.

### **Social media...**

The do's and don'ts. Social media use is very common amongst the general age group of new firefighters. This is an opportunity to address an important issue in an informal setting and let them know what's not acceptable and why. This is also an opportunity to get Public Affairs involved in a positive way. Start making individuals media-aware and familiar with some non-fire people that often get involved.

### **Where to find information...**

Some students are eager to learn more but don't know where to go or what information source is reliable. This topic provides an opportunity to show students where they can find some useful and interesting resources. By having students know and understand things like the SIT Report and InciWeb they can pass that information to concerned friends and family who may want to know how things are going but cannot reach them. It will also help students to be familiar with the position flow charts available in the PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide and the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.

### **Importance of physical fitness...**

We all know that physical fitness is important in this job but people outside of fire don't understand the level of physical fitness required by the job. Many people outside of wildland fire consider themselves to be in good shape, but don't realize that they may not be in "fire shape." Discussing physical fitness and general health as it pertains to firefighting may be enlightening to first years. This also provides an opportunity to provide resources and some of the pros and cons of more popular workouts as well as addressing nutrition issues.

## Fire movies/documentaries...

Have you ever sat watching the evening news or a movie and laughed because of the misuse of fire vocabulary? Share that same experience with a group that is learning the correct terms by watching some classic movies featuring wildfires such as *Red Skies of Montana*, Disney's *Planes: Fire and Rescue*, *Always*, *Inferno*, *Superfire*, *Firestorm*, or *Firestorm: Last Stand at Yellowstone*.

There are also videos available covering current fire topics such as NOVA: *Fire Wars*, Modern Marvels: *Firefighting! Extreme Conditions*, 60-Minutes: *The Age of Mega Fires*, and A&E Investigative Reports: *Wild Fires: Fighting Fire with Fire*.

History Channel: *Fire on the Mountain* (south Canyon), PBS: *The Big Burn* (Fires of 1910), A&E: *Escape! Fire in Mann Gulch*, Weather Channel: *America Burning: The Yarnell Hill Fire Tragedy and the Nation's Wildfire Crisis*, and *Behind the Lines: Fighting a Wildland Fire* are some documentaries that may be entertaining and educational.

# Activity Ideas

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The goal behind starting each session with an activity is that it primes the students to engage in the discussion/presentation and participate rather than be a passive observer during the session. We try to tie the activity into a concept that is important in wildland firefighting. For example: Duty, Respect and Integrity. With each idea below we provided one way that the activity can be tied back into wildland fire. Any activity can be used but short easy activities are recommended as to not make the sessions too long. For longer more involved activities consider the whole session revolve and focus solely on it.

## That's me!

"That's me!" is a simple introductory call and response game that can be used to break the ice and introduce the concept of diversity, that we can have commonalities and differences but still work together toward the same goal. Start out with explaining the rules and providing an example of participation.

*Before I begin my discussion I would like to play a little game. It's called "that's me!" It requires that everyone participates enthusiastically otherwise I stand up here just looking dumb. Since I know you don't want to hurt my feelings you are wondering "how do we play?" It's actually super easy. I am going to say a statement and if it applies to you, you jubilantly raise your fist in the air and do a glorious "Jersey Shores" fist pump as you exclaim "That's me!" For example if I say, "I just ate dinner," you respond, "That's me!" Ok let's try it one more time before we get serious. "I'm at fire school..."*

Come up with about 5 to 8 more statements that would apply to a range of students. Begin with statements like "I just finished high school," or "I live in \_\_\_\_" that would receive a small response. Gradually build up to a response that would have nearly all the students responding like "I'm adventurous," or "I like new challenges." Finish the exercise with the explanation of how the simple activity shows that we can have similarities and differences and yet together toward the same goal. Wildland fire is similar. We work on different types of modules, for different agencies, from different places with different qualifications but we come together to safely manage wildland fires.

## New Invention

For this activity you will need paper, a paperclip, and a writing utensil for each person. Give each student a paperclip and explain that it is a new invention. Then give them one minute to write down as many ways as possible that the new invention can be used. When the minute is over have each person count how many uses they determined for the new invention. Through a show of hands determine the highest number of uses determined by a student. Repeat the exercise again but this time have them partner with their neighbor and have them come up with as many unique uses as they can together. Again survey the class for the highest number of uses determined by a pair. Repeat one more time but have pairs partner up with another pair. This exercise is used to demonstrate why we don't fight fires as individuals but as crews, we can come up with more solutions as a team and get more done in less time when we work together.

## Without saying a word...

Sometimes communication itself can be an issue we face in wildland fire and we have to find a way to break through barriers to effective communication. In “Without saying a word,” we can create communication barriers by restricting student from talking while trying to complete a simple task such as lining up alphabetically. You can modify this exercise in many ways to illustrate specific points. Blind folds, half blind folded half unable to speak, only some know the task, etc. Feel free to create your own “barrier” and task to complete.

## Making Snowflakes

Each and every one of us is unique, bringing different experiences to wildland fire. Our experiences and training affects how we receive and give instructions relating to fire order number 8, “Give clear instructions and insure they are understood.” For this activity each student will need a full sheet of paper. Have the students close their eyes. While their eyes are closed give various vague instructions like: “Fold the paper in half.” “Turn 90° to the left.” “Rip off the upper right corner.” And so on. Give a total of 10-12 such instructions to make a snowflake. Have the students open their eyes and unfold their papers. Each received the same instructions but each made a unique snowflake. Ask the class why each snowflake turned out differently. This can be related to providing leaders intent when providing directions and how our own experiences color the way we interpret things.

## Selective Listening

Compose a list of objects or ideas, all similar in theme. For example: turkey, lettuce, tomato, mayo, mustard, cheese, etc. These are all sandwich components, and most people will recognize this. The list should be relatively long, maybe 15 to 20 words, and have some repeated words. For example: turkey, lettuce, tomato, mayo, mustard, cheese, ham, lettuce, pickles, onion, olives, lettuce...The moderator should read this list to the group, and then allot them 30 seconds to write down as many words as they can remember. Most people will remember the word that was repeated the most, and a notable amount will most likely write down words that were obvious, but not actually stated in the list.

This activity can be modified to demonstrate how selective listening can affect the outcome of a briefing. Do the activity above but with two lists one on a topic that is generally associated females (baking, sewing, make up) and one that is generally associated with males (sports, vehicles, hunting). Read both lists separately before having them check the accuracy of their recall. If the generality holds true (doesn't always work out because it is a generality) there will be a notable difference in the number of words successfully recalled for each list for each gender. This can be related to briefing new versus experienced wildland firefighters. Micromanaging versus providing leader's intent can also be addressed as most individuals could generate a list of 20 items relating to a topic rather than remember a specific given list. The importance of note taking could be mentioned as more words would have been recalled if participants were allowed to take notes while the lists were being read.

## Draw what you hear

Pair people up and ask your couples to sit back to back. One person in each pair should have a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Once everyone has settled, give the other person in the pair an abstract drawing (different shapes maybe joined up together) to describe to the other person in the pair. Give them two minutes to describe and draw without asking or answering any questions. Then you allow another minute for the drawer to ask questions. When the time is up, ask them to compare the drawing

to the original. Discuss why there were differences (there always are!). Was it the describing or was it the listening? Was it because they couldn't ask questions to clarify what was being described and what about not being able to see the person to get the visual clues of looking for understanding of what one is saying. This exercise is a good way to introduce the Five Communication Responsibilities for firefighters and the briefing checklist. Every firefighter carries an IRPG let's start getting them familiar with it at the beginning of their fire career.

## Be the example

This quick exercise can be used as a listening exercise, to reinforce the message that "actions speak louder than words" and that both effective followers and leaders set the example. Instruct the class "Please follow my words. Raise your right hand over your head. Keep following my words. Make a fist. Please make sure to follow my words. Make a circle with your thumb and forefinger and then put that circle on your forehead." Perform the gestures as you give the directions but instead of putting the circle on your forehead put it on your chin. You will find most of the participants will follow your action and put their circles on their jaws! Some will find their mistakes and correct it, Then you can say, "What happened? I've asked you to follow my words for three times, but you follow my actions! Why?" This type of action by both leaders and followers can greatly impact how we teach and pass on important topics such as safety. A great example of telling your group to do one thing and showing them another can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNA1278Y7ZM>

## Situational Awareness

"Situational awareness" is critical in our field, as it is dynamic and has several moving parts. Its important that we not only focus on the task at hand but also be aware of other incidents occurring. This is an extremely difficult field and the ability to be both be actively engaged and still maintain a situational awareness is very important. This activity is geared toward practicing this skill. Pass out simple discussion topics and pair the class up. Have each pair discuss their topic between themselves for 2 minutes. After the 2 minutes are up ask them what each of their neighbors were talking about – NOT what they discussed. Most of the time they can't give any information at all. Then repeat the exercise with different topics but usually this time they are more able to give feedback on what groups around them were discussing.

## Have a wicked problem?

This activity is a longer one and may be worth having its own session. It may also may be a good activity to conduct toward the end of basic fire training as it is an activity that sums up what they have learned during the training. Tom Wujec is featured in a TEDtalk entitled "Got a wicked problem? First tell me how you make toast." This talk explains how drawing out an issue on movable cards as a group provides a better understanding of a solution or concept. Watch his TEDtalk at:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/tom\\_wujec\\_got\\_a\\_wicked\\_problem\\_first\\_tell\\_me\\_how\\_you\\_make\\_toast?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_got_a_wicked_problem_first_tell_me_how_you_make_toast?language=en)

Give students two minutes to draw the process of making toast. After they are finished have the students hang them on the wall so others can see them. Watch Tom's TEDtalk and use this framework to have the students as one large group (or several smaller groups) draw the process of suppressing wildland fire. Give the students about 30 minutes to generate their fire suppression process map before having each group explain their map to other students or instructors. This activity promotes teamwork

and helps fortify the lessons learned throughout the week by working with their peers. Please visit Tom's website [drawtoast.com](https://drawtoast.com) for a more detailed outline of the activity that was adapted for this exercise.

# Local Unit Information:

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## Women in Wildland Fire

A program to provide women interested in wildland fire the training and exposure needed to break down barriers that may prevent them from seeking a career in fire and aviation management through the use of outreach, experience, and mentorship.

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